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RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0336
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RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 0859
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SUBJECT: NREL EXPERT ON RENEWABLE ENERGY RECEIVES RAVE REVIEWS IN CHILE AND ARGENTINA

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SUMMARY

¶1. Renewable energies expert Dr. Doug Arent from the U.S. National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) spoke at a series of events in Chile and Argentina on energy technology and energy efficiency, issues of primary importance to the national security of these two countries. Dr. Arent's visit was arranged under Public Diplomacy's International Information Program. His presentations to government, private sector and academic audiences were well-received, and they attracted considerable press attention. END SUMMARY.

CHILE

¶2. Dr. Arent's visit to Chile was very productive. Ambassador Paul Simons demonstrated extraordinary support for the program and actively participated during all three days.

¶3. Dr. Arent was well received by the Chilean National Energy Commission and Ministry of Treasury (on biofuels and energy efficiency), the Science and Technology commission (CONICYT), investors and banking groups (CORFO, Fundacion Chile), and business groups (AmCham/Chile, SOFOFA, CIFCO, etc.). He lectured to a multidisciplinary audience at the public University of Chile and a standing-room only event at University of Talca.

¶4. Arent's visit received substantial media coverage and very positive reactions from the Chilean public. During the Government of

Chile (GOC) meeting on biofuels and energy efficiency Dr. Arent was able to provide feedback on Chile's current plans to create a number of biofuels pilot plants across the country. Chileans sought advice on capturing international investment in these demonstrative plants, technical cooperation opportunities, and research and development challenges associated with second-generation (cellulosic) biofuels. Chileans seemed positively impressed by Dr. Arent's extensive knowledge and respect for the GOC's positions.

¶5. COMMENTS Meetings with the private sector and investors were more subdued compared to the enthusiasm at universities and with Chilean government (GOC) representatives. END COMMENT.

ARGENTINA

¶5. Dr. Arent's visit to Buenos Aires was content-filled. Dr. Arent spoke to private sector experts at Argentina's Business Council for Sustainable Development (CEADS), to political and technical staff of the Government of Argentina (GOA) Secretariat of Energy, and professors and undergraduate students at the University of Buenos Aires.

¶6. Dr. Arent also spoke to an enthusiastic group of grad students at the University of Social and Business Sciences (UCES). To close off Dr. Arent's visit, ECON Officer Douglas Climán and ESTH Officer James Perez accompanied him to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¶7. COMMENT: The Argentina program received less enthusiasm from the government of Argentina. The GOA representatives seemed to have an intrinsic distrust of a "hidden agenda". END COMMENT.

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FOLLOW-UP

¶8. Dr. Arent mentioned the possibility of making his presentations available online and having one of NREL's Spanish-speaking experts respond to questions online.

¶9. Another opportunity for collaboration is NREL's expert visitors program. During the week of August 20, the NREL facilities in Golden, Colorado was planning to receive a group of South American experts to learn more about NREL's Bio for Biofuels Program. Their visit was made possible through the Cochran Fellowship Program, which is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

CONCLUSION

¶10. The Strategic Speaker Initiative is an excellent mechanism to leverage funds towards ESTH issues with a regional perspective. For under USD 5,000, the Department of State was able to reach a significant number of government representatives, university professors, students, private investors, and business groups. Much of the South American public was not aware of the USG's advanced work in renewable energies, instead looking to Europe for renewable energy examples.

SOBEL